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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005996

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: MOPS ECON PREL PTER IZ TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY: MFA NON-PAPER ON SECURITY CONCERNS OF TURKISH DRIVERS IN IRAQ

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

11. (SBU) During an October 20 meeting (reported Septel) to discuss steps the GOT is taking to address security concerns of Turkish truck drivers, Turkish MFA DDG for Economic Affairs presented EconCouns with a non-paper listing a number of concerns and suggestions for operational improvements in the provision of security to Turkish truckers. The non-paper is based primarily on reports from truckers. It includes a number of previously-reported complaints about the adequacy of military escorts and or difficulties receiving compensation for damage and theft. It also raises some new issues, including reports that U.S. military personnel have burned broken-down trucks to prevent them from falling into the hands of Iraqi groups and that drivers were beaten by U.S. military personnel. We have no factual basis on which to judge the accuracy of these claims and allegations, but since the GOT provided the paper to us as part of their dialogue with us on trucker security, we felt it necessary to pass it on to addressees.

12. (SBU) Begin text of non paper:

Despite lack of security and threats to their lives, and a mounting increase in the kidnapping and killing of Turkish truck drivers recently, they are continuing to transport humanitarian supply and other goods to the Iraqi people, and are also transporting the necessary supplies to the Multinational Force.

On the whole, the reinforcement of security measures by the US Government under difficult conditions, by providing escorts for convoys driven by Turkish truck drivers is appreciated, knowing that not all Turkish trucks are provided with security.

Yet, we have received information from our truck drivers that the stepping up of security measures has been only of a temporary nature; namely, at times when our drivers have boycotted voyaging (traveling), or when large-scale attacks have occurred.

In April 2004 every 3-4 trucks were said to have been accompanied by one escort, as well as with a military helicopter. It would be useful to continue this practice.

We would welcome the US keeping the number of vehicles at no more than 20 in each convoy. Unloaded trucks on their return trip should not travel at night and should enjoy the same level of security along the whole route, not just in and around Baghdad.

We have also been informed that there has been a return to the three-car escort system once again. It should be noted however that three escorts are not sufficient to provide security for a convoy of half a kilometers' length (up to 20 vehicles).

Turkish citizens have let us know that, in the event of an attack on the convoys, the first to leave the scene of the event have been the escorts, and that the trucks have been used as shields to protect the escort vehicles and their military personnel.

We have even heard that the lorries are being utilized as shields against attacks around the military camps at night while the drivers sleep in them.

For example, when trucks unload their cargo in Iraq and set out on their return trip, although the number of vehicles in the convoy numbers 40-50, only 3 escorts are said to be provided, the voyage is done at night, with no head lights allowed to be turned on.

Although the security measures have been increased relatively in and around Baghdad where there are more US military units or other related organizations, the same protection measures have not been extended to other areas, especially for convoys which have unloaded and are on their way back.

When a vehicle is in need of being repaired, the drivers are forced to leave their trucks. The cargo is then collected by another towing vehicle while the original one is abandoned on the road.

On some occasions, in order to prevent the trucks from falling into the hands of Iraqi groups, it has been reported that the lorries are burned along with their towing vehicles by US military personnel.

In other instances, the trucks are handed over to the Iraqi police, the whereabouts of which are later never determined.

The reports drawn up by the US officials in Iraq about such incidents are said to reflect only a part of the reality and seem to be insufficient, and allegedly lately these reports have not even been prepared.

As a result, problems arise about compensation and other rights.

It is clear from the examples of the contracts signed between the US firms and the Kuwaiti subcontractors, that the US firms such as PWC do not assume any responsibility concerning the lorries. Instead responsibility is transferred over to the subcontracting firm. The Kuwaiti subcontractors in turn turn over this responsibility to the Turkish firms from which they rent the trucks and drivers.

In the delivery form which is to be signed by the drivers before going on their trip, it is indicated that the US firm PWC is not to be held responsible for any losses or theft incurred by the drivers or trucks in Kuwait or Iraq.

Thus in practice, the whole responsibility concerning the lorries is left to the drivers.

It is for this reason that some drivers are unwilling to leave their vehicles, when a reparation is necessary. The concerned drivers claim to have been coerced out of their vehicles, even beaten by US military personnel, as a result of which have had broken limbs.

The above-mentioned occurrences have led to unrest among Turkish drivers who are already working under very hard circumstances, and have increased their unwillingness to resume work.

It is requested that these matters are taken up with the relevant US authorities, in order to enhance security measures, and to prevent these unfortunate acts displayed by US troops.

It would be appreciated if the involved companies' contracts could be altered to include clauses on the compensation of drivers and their vehicles, as well as a clause on financial support to be disbursed to the families of the drivers in case of death as a result of abduction or attack.

13. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.